

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Curricular Philosophy and Goals

Bethel's curriculum is designed to help students develop the skills and insights to live successfully and to serve Christ effectively in the world that awaits them after graduation. The curriculum has been designed in response to two guiding questions: What will the world be like in the near future? and What personal capacities and knowledge will Bethel graduates need to cope in this world? The resulting graduation requirements are not a random sampling of academic fields. Instead, they are focused around themes that form a coherent view of the future, with each course designed to help students develop specific skills applicable to many situations in that future. The combined offerings of Bethel's General Education program and departmental and interdisciplinary majors and minors provide exceptional Christian higher education.

Movement Toward an Interconnected World

With advances in transportation and communication, our world is becoming smaller. The United States is becoming more diverse in culture, language, and even religion. The church is also changing, with the addition of hundreds of thousands of new Christians worldwide. Today the majority of Christians live outside of North America and Europe. American Christians cannot live in isolation from the people of other cultures. Careers in missions, business, and government demand the ability to think and to work cross-culturally. Students need courses that encourage the development of a global perspective, including the option of living for a time in another culture or subculture. There they can develop the cross-cultural communication skills and the special understanding needed to interact as Christians with all types of people in God's world.

Living in a High-Tech Society

Science and technology have changed and will continue to change the ways in which we understand and participate in society and culture at large. Because we have moved from a manufacturing society to a service and information society, Christian leaders in all fields need to develop competencies in the sciences and technology. Bethel's curriculum emphasizes an understanding of these domains of knowledge and their implications for life in contemporary society.

Increased Need for Skilled Communication

The impersonal nature of new technologies and the increasing alienation in contemporary society underscore the need for the development of skills in interpersonal relationships. More than ever before,

students need to understand themselves and be able to relate in meaningful and productive ways to groups and other individuals. Courses throughout the curriculum, but especially at the freshman and senior levels, address these concerns.

Increased Influence of Western Culture

As the values of Western culture grow to influence much of the world, it is important for Christians to understand the Western tradition. Many of the questions about the nature of the good life, the nature of community, and the ways in which we should relate to God that are now being answered by people all over the world have also been powerfully addressed by men and women in Europe and America. Bethel offers a sequence of courses examining and evaluating the history and the character of the Western tradition as well as the ways in which Christians have interacted with Western culture.

Continued Need for Biblical Perspective

The past, present, and future all demand that Christians be well grounded in the basics of Scripture and in the historic beliefs of the Christian faith. Courses in every discipline turn to biblical perspectives for insight. Courses in biblical and theological studies emphasize themes that unify the Bible as well as solid methods of interpretation that help prepare students to continue to study the Bible profitably and to teach others accurately.

Increased Need for Skilled Persons

No preparation for tomorrow's world can be complete without the development of certain fundamental personal capacities and skills needed by every professional person, no matter what his or her career.

- Computing
- Integrating
- Living healthfully
- Reasoning
- Creating
- Investigating
- Managing self with others
- Speaking
- Empathizing
- Learning to learn
- Writing
- Information processing
- Living from values
- Quantifying

Some of these skills are addressed in a single requirement; instructors include several of them as the explicit goals of every General Education course. A few skills, such as speaking and writing, receive special attention over a sequence of three or four courses.

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Because these skill areas are in demand by prospective employers—not only for entry-level positions, but also for leadership and upward mobility throughout one's entire career—and because these are also the traditional results of a broad education in the liberal arts, Bethel's curriculum provides opportunity for their repeated practice.

Increased Need for Integration

Bethel's ultimate goal is to produce mature Christians who can influence the peoples of the world as servants of Jesus Christ. The world is changing, and Christians need to live and serve effectively in that world. Every part of Bethel—academic, social, spiritual—focuses on this goal. In a special capstone General Education course, Contemporary Christian Issues, seniors from many major fields join in addressing a single issue of crucial importance to the world. They seek to integrate what they have learned, formulate their own Christian views, and take an informed position on an important issue.